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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Je\$\$\$e for Pre\$ident

Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign has had the press positively drooling. The Washington Post wrote of Mr. Jackson's "dramatic entry" into the race, a speech that "fired the imagination." Newsweek put him on its cover and called his speech "a rousing, revivalist war cry." Mr. Jackson had already made the cover of Time during his water-testing. When he announced his intentions during a segment of "60 Minutes," Mike Wallace & Co. traded in their boxing mitts for kid gloves.

There is, of course, one obvious reason for this attention. It truly is dramatic that in America today, the descendant of a black slave can run for president—and be taken with due seriousness. In this sense, Mr. Jackson's candidacy is another sign of the black community moving into the political mainstream. And this, as we noted recently in discussing the rise of black mayors, bodes well not only for blacks but for the society generally.

Enthusiasm for Mr. Jackson, though, has been more pronounced in the media than among spokesmen for putative members of his "rainbow coalition"—blacks, women, Indians, Hispanics and homosexuals. Among black leaders, Coretta King publicly recommended against his candidacy. Julian Bond, Tom Bradley and Coleman Young have endorsed Walter Mondale. No Jackson endorsement has come from Mayor Harold Washington of Chicago, Mr. Jackson's hometown. Indeed, a poll for the Chicago Sun-Times finds that in Illinois, Mr. Jackson would get 72% of the black vote against Ronald Reagan. This compares with 86% for John Glenn and 94% for Fritz Mondale.

It seems that a sizable voice in the black community is not eager to be represented by Mr. Jackson. No doubt some of this hesitation involves not wanting to waste a vote or influence

on a hopeless candidacy. But it is also true that the hesitation shows up most among those most familiar with Mr. Jackson's record.

Since 1971, Mr. Jackson has headed Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity). Even as we write, auditors are trying to decide what in the world PUSH has done with the money it received from the federal government. Mr. Jackson calls the audits a mere "accounting dispute." But Department of Education spokesmen say PUSH will have to return \$880,000 to \$2.1 million spent on things the government never meant its grants to finance. This is a whopper of an "accounting dispute."

Over the years a number of parties have expressed unrequited curiosity about Mr. Jackson's finances. One, for example, was the St. Louis Sentinel, a black newspaper sued for libel by Mr. Jackson. PUSH is known for getting Coca-Cola, Schlitz, Seven-Up and other companies to agree to do more trading and hiring in the black community. Shortly after a pact with Anheuser-Busch, the Sentinel quoted Mr. Jackson as telling a group of black businessmen that to get on his list for contracts, they would have to fork over \$500: "If you want to play, you have to pay." When the Sentinel called this a "kickback approach," Mr. Jackson and PUSH sued. The litigation dragged on until a key ruling last month, when a federal district judge upheld the paper's request that he force PUSH to hand over its financial records. The suit was quickly settled out of court.

This was a replay of a 1977 lawsuit in Chicago. Burson-Marsteller, a public relations firm, sued PUSH for more than \$16,000 it said it was owed for services rendered. The suit languished in court for more than two years. But in 1979, PUSH settled the debt within 48 hours after Judge Rob-

ert Cherry ordered PUSH to hand over its financial records, specifically including "all documents relating to the funding of Jesse Jackson's 1979 Middle East tour."

That trip, including Mr. Jackson's public embrace with Yasser Arafat, was perhaps Mr. Jackson's most controversial moment, along with other statements leaving a current of suspicion in the Jewish community. Rather than mend these fences after his presidential announcement, Mr. Jackson headed for Los Angeles to appear before the American Arab Antidiscrimination Committee.

The public record lends reason to suppose that Mr. Jackson has played off his Arab connections to raise money. Not long after his return in 1979, the Chicago papers carried the story that he requested contributions from a group of Arab businessmen who came to see him at PUSH. The stories said at least \$10,000 was forthcoming. And in the Billvgate investigation of 1980, a released CIA message identified Mr. Jackson as a special Libyan oil broker. Mr. Jackson denies being an agent of Libya, but admits he wrote to the Libyan embassy on behalf of "a black-owned oil company."

Mr. Jackson's financial background, then, justifies more than a little curiosity. And on the day he announced his candidacy, he promised to open up the books, an event scheduled for Nov. 15. The event has now been put off indefinitely "until our lawyers can look at the records and see the government audit," Mr. Jackson's campaign says. The expected curiosity, it seems, has not developed.

Now, we do not know how Mr. Jackson will fare once the voting starts. He certainly can give a stirring speech. And ethnic history shows that many times a voting bloc wants to make itself felt, regardless of the qualities of the particular candidate.

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